

GROVE STREET NEWS

VOL. IX - NO. 1

P.O. Box 48, Village Station, NYC 10014

FEBRUARY 1982

SUNDAY BRUNCH FEB. 21

Mark your calendar for Sunday, February 21. That afternoon you're invited to a neighborhood brunch at the elegant Five Oaks Restaurant, sponsored by the Grove Street Block Association.

All Grove Street residents and their guests are welcome; it will be a good opportunity to meet some of your neighbors and learn a little more about your Block Association.

We'll be having The

Five Oaks' excellent Quiche Lorraine, spinach salad, sesame bread sticks, coffee, a free drink . . . and live piano music . . . all for an inflation-fighting \$3 at the door.

Our last neighborhood brunch, in 1980, was good fun for all and is still talked about. The Five

Oaks was the site for that one too, so we're looking forward to another pleasant afternoon this year.

Remember:

Date: Sunday, Feb. 21

Time: Noon to 3 p.m.

Place: The Five Oaks Restaurant, 49 Grove St.

See you there . . .

New Officers Elected

by Laurie Witkin

Last October at a general meeting open to all residents, the Grove Street Block Association elected a new group of officers for the coming year. Those elected ranged from original founding members to residents who had attended only a few meetings previously. Following are brief profiles:

GUY BAEHR - President
- 41 Grove Street

Our President has a long history of social involvement. He was born 35 years ago in Briarcliff Manor, near Ossining, N.Y.

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Block Has Fun, Makes Money—See Pg. 6

GROVE STREET: A Brief History

by Mann Genchell

In pre-revolutionary times, Grove Street was a rustic road winding along verdant meadows and woods in an area of large, noble estates.

After the Revolution, the estates were divided up and sold in smaller lots to the prosperous craftsmen, carpenters and sailmakers who owned businesses along the Hudson River docks.

Very early in its history, Grove Street sheltered a world-famous revolutionary hero--Thomas Paine. In 1809, Madame Bonneville, a friend of Paine's, bought a farmhouse on the site of 59 Grove, where Paine died in the same year.

The only remaining structure of that period is the frame house at 17 Grove. Built in 1822, it is probably the oldest house in the Village. The smaller house behind it, facing Bedford Street, was built in 1833. It is variously thought to have been a workshop or servants' quarters for the big house.

Grove Street became a certified street in 1809, when it was ceded to the city by Trinity Church. It was then called Cozine Street for a prominent family of the time. In 1811, it was renamed Columbia Street. Two years later it had another name change to Burrows Street, for a war hero. Finally, in 1829, it became Grove because Burrows was too similar to neighboring Barrow Street. According to legend, Grove was chosen because the street was or-

iginally cut through a garden. By 1836 it was widened and straightened and had some of its fine houses already in place.

The houses at 2½ to 10 were constructed between 1825 and 1834 in the Federal style. The Greek Revival houses, 29 and 31, were built in 1841. Numbers 12 through 18 were put up in 1840.

The most impressive of the traditional Grove Street houses is 45. It was built in 1830 for a prominent manufacturer and was a free-standing mansion surrounded by spacious grounds. When it was completed, it was considered the largest and finest Federal residence in Greenwich Village. A contemporary newspaper called it "a splendid mansion." In 1839 it was purchased by a stockbroker whose widow sold the house and surrounding land for development--which is why there are stores on Bleecker Street and east of Bleecker on Grove. Although it was altered in 1870, the house retains much of its original grandeur. Recently, with some period embellishments by studio set designers, the house was used as an exterior location for the current film, "Reds."

The secluded enclave, Grove Court, on the other hand, was completed in 1854 and originally planned for workingmen. In the 19th century, it was known as "Mixed Ale Alley"--conceivably a reference to the drinking habits of its residents.

During the 1920s and 1930s most of the Grove Street houses were divided into apartments. Due to the low rents and the "quaint bohemian" atmosphere of the Village, these apartments attracted artists, writers and artistically-induced followers. Grove Street thus became a party to the American cultural upsurge of the time.

The houses and apartment buildings on Grove Street are an eclectic group, ranging from the Federal, Greek Revival and Italianate styles of 28 to 38 (1852) to 22-24 (1930) with its Art Deco influence. Although a number of houses were demolished for apartment buildings, such as 42 (1914) and 26 (1927) and many houses remodelled, not too successfully (for instance 39, built in 1839, had a stucco and tile facade imposed on it in 1926)--still, the street has retained a human scale and the newer and revised buildings eventually seemed to mellow and blend into their surroundings.

Now that the Village is a landmark, there should be no more destruction of the irreplaceable Grove Street houses. It is encouraging to note that the current refurbishing of many of the houses is being done with sensitivity to their original, harmonious character.

The rows of flourishing trees planted by the Grove Street Block Association enhance the tradi-

tional ambience of this classic street and invoke its origin--in a garden.

Note: There is very little information in usual research channels on the people who live or used to live on Grove Street. The one exception is Thomas Paine. If anyone has data on other prominent--or even notorious--residents of Grove Street, please give the information to the Newsletter staff for further articles on Grove Street history.

THE STATE OF THE BLOCK

By Guy T. Baehr, President

Three years ago when I moved to Grove Street and joined the Grove Street Block Association, I was curious about how the group got started back in 1971. Talking to some of the founders, I discovered it was first established to deal with a wave of muggings on the street. After a resident was knifed in the doorway of his building, 200 residents met and took

up a collection to purchase some of the first high-intensity street lights installed on a public street in New York City.

Next the Association began a long-term project to improve the block's appearance. Ten years ago Grove Street was not as attractive and tree-lined as it is today. (Our block is featured in the current film, Reds.) The BA has spent thousands of dollars earned at its annual street fairs to plant new trees, replace dead ones and install the wrought-iron wickets that now protect all but five of the trees between Seventh Avenue and Hudson Street.

TREES AND CRIME

Trees and crime are still issues on which the Block Association is working. Stan Frank, one of the originators of the tree-planting effort, is working on a project to replace two trees that have died. Up to \$800 from last year's block fair will be used. Jean Cooks, a new resident, is working with a neighborhood anti-crime group on ways for the BA to deal with a significant increase in burglaries and street incidents in our area.

Past experience shows we can be uniquely effective by dealing with these two issues through the Block Association. Through self-help we can do things for the block that no city agency could do--even if the city had the money.



Picturesque Grove Court, Originally Built for Working Men in the 19th Century, Was Known as Mixed Ale Alley.

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New Officers.

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After receiving a B.A. from Wesleyan University in Connecticut, where he studied government, history and economics, Guy joined the Peace Corps. He was sent to the Dominican Republic where he worked in community development, organizing small farmers. He returned in 1971 and became involved in the Vietnam peace movement and the McGovern campaign.

Deciding on a career in journalism, he took some writing courses at NYU's School of Continuing Education, and was hired by the Passaic Herald-News in New Jersey, where he covered Passaic and Paterson. He took several months off to report for a short-lived English-Spanish-Italian language weekly in Paterson before returning to the Herald-News to cover Bloomfield, Lodi and then the Bergen County Courthouse.

His next job was night rewrite at the Star-Ledger in Newark until he took off another nine months to earn a master's degree at the Columbia School of Journalism. On his return to the Star-Ledger, he was promoted to cover transit and highways throughout New Jersey.

Guy moved to Grove Street in August of 1978. He sold hot dogs at the 1979 block fair and was chairman of the 1981 fair. Since being elected President, he has helped revive the Newsletter and begun to form committees to deal with specific problems, such as crime. He feels the social aspect of the Association (getting to meet neighbors)

is just as important as the civic function (planting trees, coping with crime, etc.).

In his spare time, Guy prefers to stay in the ciyt, walking around, people-watching, going to movies and reading. He also spends some time developing photographs in his darkroom and building most of his own furniture.

STAN FRANK - Vice President - 26 Grove Street

Stan moved here 13 years ago and shortly afterward helped found the Block Association.

Besides serving as Vice President, he is on the Planting Committee and the Block Fair Committee. He lives with his wife Sandy, a designer and teacher at FIT, and two cats, Nubie and Pookie. He has a new job in advertising-merchandising with the OGI group. In his spare time he likes to go sailing on the Sound, go to the theater and gallery hop. The metal wicket protectors around Grove Street trees are his own design.

RIA BOEMI - Vice President - 40 Grove Street

This is Ria's first year with the Block Association. Since moving here 3½ years ago, she is continually discovering the city. She likes to take long walks through different neighborhoods. She is a graduate of Alfred University and now works with the American Field Service as an Assistant Director of Public Affairs. She is also active on the GSBA Planting Committee. Her special interest is controlling the crime on Grove Street.

MAIER GOLDBERG-Vice President - 49 Grove Street

Two and a half years ago Maier moved on the block and had scarcely parked before he jumped right into the affairs of Grove Street. Despite his many other interests--his job (Principal of Preparatory Programs for Health Program Unions), his bike riding (he's been hit three times but still pedals on), his pottery (many original objects d'art decorate his apartment), his dancing (he's been in lots of companies, including NYU's troupe for children), his further interest in children (he did a TV show for them)--Maier has enough energy left over to work for the Block Association. He started two of his own projects: He was successful at stopping the incinerator on Grove Street that was belching smoke by calling the EPA. He is still campaigning for a traffic light on the corner of Grove and Bleecker. At the annual block fair he sold watermelon to benefit the block and is co-chairman of the post-block fair committee.

FREEMAN McMILLAN - Secretary - 23 Grove Street

Mac's work on the Block Association comes from his interest in urban affairs and people. He became active soon after the Association was formed, has served on just about every committee, and was President in 1976. Around the neighborhood, he worked with the Friends of Christopher Park.

When he moved to Grove Street in 1967, Mac worked for Sears in the buying office. In 1976 he quit his

job to return to school at the Fordham University. He now works at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City as a non-traditional teacher where he develops internships, advises students and teaches seminars on job preparation. He is also on the board of the Association for the Integration of Management.

Mac lives with Napoleon, a Persian cat. He likes to go to the movies and watch the MacNeil-Lehrer Report. Recently he has started running and other athletic pursuits.

BERYL KENDE - Treasurer
- 49 Grove Street

Beryl has been living on the block for 15 years, and has this year, out of a growing curiosity to know what's going on, joined the Block Association.

She grew up in the Village and in Newtown, Connecticut. She got her BA from Mount Holyoke in economics and sociology. She then went on to get two master's: one in learning disabilities from Teachers College and the other in social work from Smith. After serving in the Peace Corps in Brazil, and working at the United Nations, she started her career as a social worker. She is now the chief psychiatric social worker at Geller House on Staten Island, where she helps treat disturbed teenagers. She lives with her cat Minina.



28 TREES: The Greening of Grove Street

By Stan Frank

New York City has over 600,000 street trees, with 28 of them on Grove Street. In a city of concrete and paving, trees make our streets more beautiful and our city a better place to live. Besides filtering dust, smoke, odors and dirt from the air, street trees are believed to reduce naturally such pollutants as ozone and sulphur dioxide. Trees also absorb noise, provide oxygen for us to breathe and give us cooling shade on hot days. Without our trees Grove Street would be a far less attractive street on which to live.

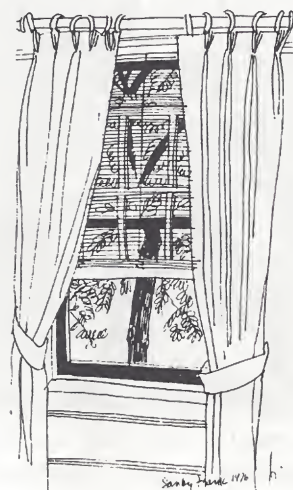
HONEY LOCUSTS, GINGKOS,
CALLERY PEARS, LINDENS,
PAGODAS AND LONDON PLANES

All of this didn't come easily. Since the Block Association was formed in 1972 we have worked closely with the City to install and maintain our street trees. In the fall of 1973 the Block Association planted ten honey locusts on the street. In the spring of 1976 the City planted four trees (primarily ginkgos) in front of 19, 33, 35 and 36 Grove. In the fall of 1977 the Association added five more trees including the Callery pear which flowers in the spring in front of 21 and

four linden trees. Prior to that the City had installed the older pagoda and London plane (sycamore). (The London planes are the trees with multi-colored, mottled bark that falls off in irregular patches.)

AND NOW CHINESE HOLLY

This spring we are planning to replace two of our existing trees (at 14 and 50 Grove) with healthier specimens. We also have plans to test out a Chinese holly (commonly called Ilex), which is an evergreen shrub, in a cement planter in front of Le Bistrot Restaurant. If this is successful, other planters may be installed in different locations.



1981 Fair Continues Ten Year Tradition

By Guy T. Baehr

The 1981 Grove Street Fair was not the most elaborate block fair in the Association's 10-year history, but the June 6 event kept up the tradition of having an annual fair and added \$2,017 to the Association's treasury.

Fortunately, despite



some early morning doubts, the weather also maintained its tradition of being nice when the Grove Street Block Association holds its street fairs.

Maybe it was the recession or maybe just the aftermath of people's Spring cleaning, but Grove Streeters took an unusually large percentage of the available booths--at the special \$20 discount price for block residents.

All told, more than 80 vendors took part and Vendors Committee Chairman Stan Frank had to turn away more than 20 applicants. He used the opportunity to give preference to vendors and craftspeople from the Village area and to those selling more interesting and unusual items. Notice of the fair appeared in The Villager, the Village Voice and The New York Times Weekend section.

Gerry Kline hired a number of street performers--ranging from a bagpiper to a group of Shakespearean actors--to add to the festivities. And Jack DuMars set up a sound system on his fire escape to provide an eclectic program of recorded music. Fears that Grove Street would go disco proved groundless.

Block Association tables were organized by a number of dedicated (and, after the fair, sore-footed) individuals. Linda Franklin took charge of the beer, wine and soda table (\$98.25 profit). Joyce Sozen and Jan Buckaloo sold hot dogs (\$74.68). Maier Goldberg pushed fruit cups on an unwary public (\$24.07) and Beryl Kende moved the goods at the rummage table (\$116.55).

Teresa Dente helped out as usual, baking and selling her homemade creations to benefit the Association.

Heyward Erlich and Charles Dupuy helped string the banner across Bleecker Street and post flyers around the neighborhood, as well as helping with the tables and with the clean-up.

NEW RULES FOR STREET FAIRS

The only sour note was sounded by the City of New York. Starting in 1981, the city put into effect new rules governing block fairs that require organizers to pay the city 15 percent of the booth rental fees they collect from vendors. The new rules also require burdensome bookkeeping. This new tax applies to all fairs that go for more than one day or one block.

To avoid coming under the new rules, the Association voted to limit last year's fair to the single block between Bedford and Bleecker, rather than extend it the usual three blocks from Hudson to Seventh. Part of the reason was the burdensome bookkeeping, but we were also angry that the city would tax a non-profit community group that is only trying to make the city a little better.

With the approval of the Executive Committee, I am working with other block associations and organizations in the Village and elsewhere to try to have the rules changed so that parts of the city with short blocks and strong traditions of non-profit community block fairs are not unfairly harmed by these regulations, which are really aimed at such large commercial ventures as the Ninth Avenue Festival. Stay tuned.

St. Luke's Rebuilding After Fire Last Year

Block Association Starts Matching Fund

By Charles Dupuy

When consecrated on May 22, 1822, it became known as St. Luke's-in-the-Fields. The Hudson River shores were only a block away. Greenwich itself was a quiet country village several miles north of Manhattan, accessible only by boat and two bridges over a canal, now Canal Street. Much has changed in the past 160 years, but St. Luke's involvement with the community remains steadfast. Starting in 1792 with a dole from John Leake, the church has provided food for the poor after Sunday services. Even now the church serves as a community meeting place for many organizations, including our own Block Association. Indeed, we owe our name to the efforts of the first rector of St. Luke's who planted trees in the churchyard. His neighbors followed his lead and the street became known as "Grove."

FIRE OF 1866

The church nearly perished from fire once before, in 1866, but the danger then was not so great as that from the fire that occurred on March 6 this year. "Pyrofluorocarbonization" was the cause of the recent fire: "heat from a steam pipe changing the chemical composition

of the wood, over the years, until the beam ignites." Work to rebuild St. Luke's started almost immediately after the fire: the debris has been cleared and the structurally unsound elements have been removed. All that remains standing are the walls and the tower, made from rose-colored bricks from Holland that came here as ballast on

help in this rebuilding project. We will match, 50 cents to the dollar, contributions sent through the Block Association, made payable to the Saint Luke's Rebuilding Fund. Our goal is to raise \$1000.00 and thus far we have reached \$700.00. A tax-deductible gift of \$10.00 will put one more brick in place, so won't you please help?



View of St. Luke's Church from Grove Street

sailing ships. The architectural plans from Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates are in and a new, hand-made tracker-action organ has been ordered. The restoration has begun, but the costs will run into the millions.

REBUILDING AFTER 1981

We of the Grove Street Block Association want to

ENCLOSED IS MY TAX-
DEDUCTIBLE GIFT OF \$ _____
PAYABLE TO:

ST. LUKE'S REBUILDING FUND
c/o GROVE STREET B.A.
P.O. BOX 48 VILLAGE STATION
NEW YORK, NY 10014

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we need support from all sectors, public, private and political. The group was divided into various action groups which will approach the problems as follows:

--Civilian Patrol: This patrol will walk in groups of 5-10 people each evening. This is not a vigilante group. The purpose here is to move out all crime-motivated individuals. It will receive training and back-up protection from the police.

--Police Auxiliary Units: Currently we have over 70 members of the Auxiliary Police at our precinct. The Police Auxiliary offers a total formal training period of 14 weeks and equips members with uniforms and walkie-talkies

--Block Watching: This has proven to be effective to fight crime in many areas of New York. The task here is to keep an open ear and eye on the street and then report anything suspicious

--Media and Political Pressure: Extensive letter-writing campaign and holding various meetings with politicians, judges, district attorneys, etc., so our voices can be heard

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

West Village Action Coalition for a Safe Neighborhood will be holding another meeting in the near future. If you would like to help on any of these projects, or have any other ideas on the subject, please call Wendy Reiner (974-7275) and she'll be happy to discuss them with you--your participation is really needed and greatly appreciated.

If you should be the unfortunate victim of a crime, the first thing to do is notify the Sixth Precinct at 741-4811. If it is an emergency situation dial 911 immediately! As a further aid to crime victims the City of New York has established the Victim Services Agency which runs a Hotline. For free services, counseling and information, you can call them at 557-7777. They're there for you and they want to help in any way that they can.

We must all realize that as lovely as Grove Street is, and as marvelous as Greenwich Village can be, it is not a sedate haven amidst the raging streets of New York City. It is an area, afflicted like all of Manhattan, with a severe crime problem. Our community is made up of law-abiding citizens. The individuals who are robbing, mugging and raping our neighbors are not from this community --they are coming in from other areas. We must make sure that they do not find us an easy target and stay to terrorize our neighborhood.

REMEMBER: Street sense is good sense. We have to help each other to help ourselves and we CAN make a difference!

If you would like more information on the Grove Street Crime Watch or would like to help the Block Association in its efforts to combat crime in our neighborhood, please write to Grove Street Crime Watch, P.O. Box 48, Village Station, New York City 10014.

-Jean Cooks

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WHY GET INVOLVED?

Important as these efforts are, I don't think they are the main reasons why I or most others have gotten involved or stayed active. This newsletter--now being revived after a four-year lull--shows how much more there is to the Grove Street Block Association; how wide a range of interests and activities we have on this short street.

Frankly, I think the reasons people get involved are fairly simple and basic: For an opportunity to meet some of the interesting people you keep seeing on the street; to pass a tree each day and know that you helped plant the flowers or pachysandra around it during the Annual Spring Planting; or to share an interesting bit of local history or your concern about a community problem by writing an item for the Grove Street News.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION

A block association like this one is about as voluntary an organization as you can find. As it starts its second decade, I hope to maintain it as a group that taps the abundant talent and energy we have on Grove Street and returns to those who volunteer an equal measure of enjoyment and satisfaction. If something here interests you--or if you have an interest you'd like to see the block involved in--please drop me a note (41 Grove Street), give me a call (242-6141) or just come to the brunch or to our next meeting.

GSBA: Our First Ten Years

By Connie Grover

CONGRATULATIONS! The Grove Street Block Association is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

The Association plans to mark the start of its second decade with a variety of events, beginning with a brunch on February 21st.

The 1972 Charter

The GSBA, best known for its annual block fairs and street beautification efforts, met originally to deal with security problems in the neighborhood. Though it had come together some months earlier, its existence was formalized by Charter in October of 1972.

At that time membership comprised "all residents, merchants and owners of property between Seventh Avenue South and Hudson Street" but was expanded in 1975 to incorporate the block east of Seventh Avenue. The Block Association's purposes, according to the Charter, were "to promote and encourage the viability of the neighborhood in general and specifically to enhance the appearance, safety and general quality of life on Grove Street."

Growth in the '70s

The GSBA flourished in the mid-'70s as part of the block association movement that swept New York City in those years. Much as today, a recession caused the city to tighten its purse strings, and citizens were called upon to help maintain services previously provided by city government. For example, the Association

raised funds for the purchase and planting of trees and the installation of tree guards and wickets. At this time annual planting and clean-up days evolved which are still held each Spring.

Other activities were popular during the '70s. A food co-op helped members deal with rising food prices, providing weekly sales of fresh produce and dairy products at low cost. Athletically inclined residents



met for weekly basketball and volleyball games. Christmas parties, a "Spring Fling" and other social events were sponsored.

Over the years the Block Association has come to grips with a variety of issues of concern to the street and the community. In one of its more memorable battles, it fought the establishment of a "gourmet hot dog" operation on the corner where Under the Trees restaurant now stands.

The Association has continued to work closely on many matters with Community Board 2, the Sixth Precinct,

neighboring block associations and other community agencies and organizations. It joined, for instance, with other West Village groups to protest plans for the construction of Westway, and at least helped delay for some time the incursion of the projected superhighway on the Lower West Side. In addition Grove Street members helped form and support Friends of Christopher Park to upgrade the park area at Sheridan Square.

All of these activities have required funding. This has come primarily from the hugely successful annual street fairs. Visitors have flocked to Grove Street from all over the metropolitan area to "eat, drink and make merry" at such events as the Renaissance Fair, the Harvest, the Big Apple and the International Food Festivals.

The Second Decade

Equally important as their fund-raising aspect, the block parties have served as the rallying point each year for those who live and work on Grove Street. Tenants, merchants and homeowners alike--with generous assistance from neighbors, such as St. Luke's--have joined to contribute their time, talents and energies in a mutual effort to achieve the goals of the Block Association. With the continued participation of old friends and new, the GSBA can look forward to a second successful decade.

NEWSLETTER STAFF: Guy Baehr, Jean Cooks, Charles Dupuy, Heyward Ehrlich, Sandy & Stan Frank, Mann Genchell, Connie Grover, Freeman McMillan, Norma Nannini, Laurie Witkin